

village view

by Andrea Leonard

Less than fifty years ago the Cape Cod Advancement Plan of Hyannis, together with the fledgling Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, published a small booklet extolling the beauties and virtues of the Cape. It was intended to lure visitors to our narrow land and was compiled from previously unpublished legends, stories, anecdotes and photographs concerning Cape Cod.

As a piece of memorabilia, the booklet is interesting with its few descriptions of very early times in these parts, a portion of a diary written during the War of Independence, excerpts from the records of the Ladies Circle of Orleans, yarns of a man who killed a wolf in Sandwich, how division of property was handled, and never-to-be-heard-again Cape Cod dialects.

It retells tales of repelling raids of the British at Falmouth during the War of 1812 and describes in the words of a seaman aboard the U.S.S. Constitution how "Old Ironsides" captured the British ship "Guerriere".

There's a short section honoring quaint Cape characters and several anecdotes illustrating unusual and amusing aspects of lives of Cape Codders in earlier days when the Cape was isolated and provincial.

Perhaps of greater interest to many who live on Cape Cod today are the last few pages of the booklet. Here is to be found a directory of recommended hotels and inns as well as rooms, camps and cabins, and rates asked in the year 1935.

While many of the hotels and inns listed no longer operate and, in many instances the buildings themselves no longer stand, a few of these establishments still welcome tourists and travelers. Among them is the well-known Chatham Bars Inn and Cottages. At the time the booklet was published, Chatham Bars had 138 rooms; the daily rate, including three meals, ranged from \$7 to \$12 per person.

Wayside Inn in Chatham offered 16 rooms at daily rates between \$1.75 and \$4, excluding meals. Cotuit Inn, which was open all year at that time, had 35 rooms renting from \$4 to \$8 a day, including meals.

In Harwichport were two of the Cape's older accommodations; they're there still. Both stayed open year round and included meals in their rates. The Melrose with 40 rooms would house and feed you for \$4 a day and up; Snow Inn, with 68 rooms, charged \$6 a day and up.

Tourists coming to Hyannis had a choice of several hotels and inns; those of us whose memories go back a while will recognize their names: The Coffee House, Eagleston Inn, Hyannis Arms, Hyannis Inn, Lewis Bay Lodge, and the Mayflower Hotel. The lowest rate among these was \$2.50 daily without meals. The most expensive was \$7 including food.

In Osterville, East Bay Lodges 60 rooms started at \$6 a day, including meals. Just for fun, check the rate, without meals, today. There's little comparison between the elegant accommodations presently available and the small under-the-

eaves rooms you'd have been shown forty years ago, but the food was as excellent and the view of the bay as superb as it is in the 'seventies.

Rates at rooming houses were equally miniscule. A couple could stay overnight in Hyannis for \$4; or in a Chatham tourist camp for \$12 a week.

Finally, furnished Cape Cod cottages, summer houses, and waterfront estates could be leased on a monthly or seasonal basis, just as they can today. There was quite a difference in price, however, since rentals ranged upward from \$150 a month.

It's easy to overlook some of the reasons for the surprising increases in costs of visiting the Cape; it's easy to forget that in 1935 there was no minimum wage and an unskilled laborer worked, when he could find a job, for \$1 a day. The man who claimed an income of \$5,000 a year was considered well-to-do; many a professional person or business proprietor supported a wife and several children on half that amount. You could purchase a four-bedroom, two-bath house on ample acreage in any Cape Cod village for around \$6,000; for less if it wasn't in tip-top shape.

How did visitors, summer people and tourists reach the Cape in earlier days of this century? There were automobiles, of course, just as there are today, although not so many of them.

In addition, from Boston, three trains ran to Hyannis and Woods Hole each day. The trip by train took two hours. Steamships connected with trains and bus lines at Fall River, New Bedford, Providence and Woods Hole.

Steamers also ran between New York and Boston each day. A ship left both ports at 5:00 P.M., Eastern Daylight Time, and arrived at its destination at 8:00 the next morning. The New York bound boats passed through the Cape Cod Canal each evening at about 8 o'clock.

There were also steamships making daily trips from Boston to Buzzards Bay, Provincetown and Plymouth; these connected via bus and train to various Cape villages.

Even then air service was available to Boston via charter from North Falmouth. Flights could be arranged between many of the Cape's small air fields, as well.

Today, strangely, there's less public transportation than there was back in the 'thirties. Without a car, people now living on the Cape are isolated for the most part.

Making comparisons between the yesterdays and today may seem a futile exercise; nevertheless, there are lessons in history. The booklet mentions a few facts of the era to give us a moment's pause if we consider the changes seen in less than fifty years, and the effects these changes have had on our society as a whole.

Consider this: In 1935 the President of the United States was Franklin D. Roosevelt; according to Alvin Page Johnson, member of the New England Historical Geneological Society, who traced the Roosevelt line, FDR was descended from eleven of "The Mayflower's" passengers, those hardy souls who first landed at Provincetown in 1620. Six of the eleven were among the 41 persons to sign the Mayflower Compact. And in 1935, some three hundred years later, Mr Roosevelt stood at the helm of a nation of more than a hundred million people.

It should give us a jolt to realize it took over 300 years for the United States to grow to a nation of more than a hundred million souls--but less than half-a-century to double our population.

Is it any wonder, then, these are years of social turmoil? Is it any wonder we're plagued with unemployment, overcrowding, rising prices, changes so rapid we find adjustments difficult to make?

The study of history isn't entirely a nostalgia trip. Perhaps our best chance of surmounting today's problems is to view them in relation to the past, and to project into the future what we may expect, based to some extent on what's gone before.

If you conclude you were born forty years too late, though, you weren't living on Cape Cod in the 'thirties and can't remember what "hard times" were like. If your memory does go back that far, you know most people are far better off than they were then.

Even with inflation, unemployment, and limited public transportation on Cape Cod, we're better off. Even with twice as many people living, working, raising families in our country, we're still better off.



Above is one of the 500 photos of old Osterville which have been chosen to be published in a pictorial history of Osterville. Watch for information regarding the book in The VillageAdvertiser. Photo shows Mulberry Corners, looking toward the Country Store, in the early 1900's.